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191545Z Apr 06

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 001182

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DEPT FOR EUR/RPM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN VIEWS ON NATO GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP -
SUPPORTIVE OF CONCEPT, CONCERNS ABOUT PRESENTATION AND SPEED

REF: A. STATE 56334

[1](#)B. USNATO 213

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR DAVID D. PEARCE, REASONS 1.
4 B AND D.

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Italy has a positive impression of the U.S. concept for a NATO Global Partnership and is interested in pursuing it further, but registered concerns about our presentation and approach, fearing we are moving too fast, without a clear enough sense of what partners want or expect, or of possible negative consequences for existing NATO partner bodies in which the Alliance has invested a decade and which Italy highly values. Italy would like more clarity on the institutional and legal framework for the Global Partnership, and detail on how its objectives differ from/fit with those of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), NATO-Russia Council (NRC), NATO-Ukraine council (NUC), Istanbul cooperation Initiative (ICI) and the Med Dialogue (MD). POLMILCOUNS discussed Ref A NATO Global Partnership points and Ref B food-for-thought paper with Italian MFA NATO Office Director Bardini April 18. Bardini said that regardless of how the Italian government formation process comes out, he is absolutely convinced that Italy will retain its strong commitment to NATO as a pillar of its foreign policy, including NATO's regional partnerships and the proposed Middle East Security Cooperation Center, and that Italy would continue to work for a European security and defense policy that was complementary to NATO. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On April 18, POLMILCOUNS discussed Ref A points and Ref B food-for-thought paper on a NATO Global Partnership (GP) with Italian MFA NATO Office Director Gianni Bardini. We asked Bardini what impact a possible Prodi-led center-left Government in Rome would have on Italy's NATO policy, especially its partnership and outreach beyond Alliance borders. Bardini replied that Italy's position on NATO was rock-solid. A center-left government, he assured us, would not make any changes to Italy's NATO policies, or its support for the Alliance, including its partnerships, as a central pillar of Italian foreign policy. He did say that he expected Rome to pay more attention to the development of the EU's security and defense capabilities, but that Italy would, as it always has, continue to insist on complementarity with NATO. Turning to the NATO GP points and paper, Bardini said Italy's overall impression of the U.S. concept was generally positive and that Italy was extremely interested in pursuing it further. However, he registered some concerns. He stressed that his critiques were intended as constructive criticism to strengthen the concept, not to attack it. With that in mind he offered the following.

"Don't Fix What Isn't Broken"

[1](#)3. (C) Bardini noted that the Alliance had worked hard to build value into its partnership arrangements over the past 10 years, that Italy wanted to preserve the existing structures, and that Rome would favor an evolutionary approach to expanding partnerships rather than a more revolutionary one. "Don't fix what isn't broken." He said that presenting a concept for a single Global Partnership suggested something above what the Alliance now has in the EAPC, Med Dialogue, NRC, NUC and ICI, and worried that it might make those arrangements irrelevant, or at least appear less relevant. Italy, he said, was certainly open to doing more with the countries with which NATO had contact -- with their expectations in mind, and not imposed by the Alliance. He cautioned that the Alliance needed to be sure it would not get a luke-warm reception from the partner countries. That would, he said, be worse than no innovation at all. However, in his experience both as Italian DCM at NATO and in contacts with diplomats in Rome, many potential partner countries, Japan and South Korea for example, do not have clear ideas about what NATO could offer them or what they would want from

NATO, nor about obligations, commitments and other implications of a NATO relationship, and are in a "wait-and-see" mode. Japan in particular, he said, was not ready to join this kind of Global Partnership. Bardini said NATO should intensify contact with potential partners to see where there are points of common ground before deciding what a partnership with them would look like.

Strengthen Relations Gradually, Full Partner Buy-In

14. (C) Pointing out that NATO already meets with troop contributing nations (TCN) to exchange information, he suggested NATO broaden the scope of those interactions as a first step, to shape a vision of how the relationships might evolve. He said he was not convinced that it would be enough just to sit together at 26 plus N. Bardini said Italy fully agrees that NATO should strengthen its relations with security providers and consumers, but that this should be done gradually, with the full agreement, or "buy-in" of the non-Allies involved. Certainly, he said, there was room to improve the existing mechanisms, including the EAPC, but he was concerned that the Global Partnership paper implied replacing the EAPC, NRC, NUC, MD, ICI and TCN consultations with something looser but more esteemed. On the EAPC in particular, he said he could envision more tailored agendas focused on regional problems, or even widening the EAPC membership. EAPC membership was, however, an important objective for Serbia and Bosnia, for example, and a motivator that might be lost if it appeared to be downgraded. He urged care not to lose 10 years of building the EAPC's foundations, but rather to expand it and accelerate its work. He also suggested looking at NATO's many partnership tools to see if they all still made sense and whether they couldn't be streamlined to simplify NATO's partnership toolbox.

Security Providers Forum - Who Qualifies?

15. (C) Bardini said that putting all NATO partnerships in one basket risked losing valuable specificity that exists in the current partner institutions, without knowing what we would gain in the bargain. He asked who would decide what states qualified for the Security Provider's Forum (SPF) and based on what criteria. Bardini saw no problem having 26 plus 1 discussions with high-end providers going well beyond the current info exchanges, but said we must pulse the potential partners to see if they are truly interested in a larger, more inclusive forum. He speculated that if the SPF wanted to discuss, for example, Iran, it would be very awkward to exclude from that meeting our EAPC and MD partners who have longer ties with the Alliance and some of whom are in the same region. And would we really want to include, say, Brazil or India should they choose to contribute enough resources or personnel to qualify for the SPF?

Looking for Clarity on Institutional Framework

16. (C) Bardini asked if we could provide more clarity on the legal and institutional framework for the Global Partnership, or a wiring diagram to show how it fits in with EAPC, NRC, NUC, MD and ICI. He asked how the GP's objectives would differ from those of the other NATO partner institutions and how those institutions would fit into the SPF. He also worried that mixing the many different regions and different cultures of the various potential GP partners posed a risk, and reiterated that it was vital any new NATO partner fully/fully share the goals and objectives of the Alliance for the partnership. He closed by saying he believed the new thrust toward broader partnerships had significant value, but that moving to institutionalize the partnerships with speed before a political framework was carefully built in the Alliance and with potential partners could lead to mistakes that would harm NATO's interests. He did not think many ministers would be prepared to discuss the GP proposal at Sofia. (NOTE: FM Fini will not attend the Sofia meeting.) Bardini asked that we stay in close touch on the GP as our ideas develop further.

BORG